



Education for Lifelong Mental Health

What I should know about **DEPRESSION**



What is depression?

Depression is a mental illness that affects how you think, feel, and behave. It is as serious as getting a physical illness like diabetes, because it can stop you from being able to do the things you would normally do, like work, fun activities, and caring for yourself. It can last weeks, months, or even years.

Depression is not uncommon. About 1 out of 10 adults has some type of depression. It is very important to learn about depression as it can be treated. Depression is not just a bad mood or feeling sad, it is a treatable illness.

Why do people get depression?

- People get depressed when some chemicals in their brain are not working properly.
- Some people might be more likely to get depression because other members of their family have had it too.
- Some people might get depression when they get a serious illness like cancer.
- Some people might get depression when a loved one dies, or they lose their job, or they break-up with a girl/boyfriend, or get divorced from their husband/wife.



If you think you might have depression, you should let your caregiver and/or doctor know. They can make sure you get the help that you need.

Do you have depression?

Depression makes it difficult to work, sleep, enjoy activities, eat, and/or have fun with friends and family. There are different types of depression, and depression can be different for each person. Depression is a mix of things that get in the way of day-to-day life.

Depression can affect your thoughts, feelings, and what you do. Depression can also impact how your body feels. You might notice that you are:

Thoughts and Feelings

- Feeling very sad
- Not wanting to do things you used to like
- Easily annoyed
- Feeling like things are never going to get better
- Feeling guilty a lot
- Feeling like you can't do anything right
- Thinking about hurting yourself
- Thinking that you might be better off dead

Body

- Crying a lot
- Very sleepy even during the day
- Not be able to sleep much
- Losing or gaining some weight without trying
- Restless or moving around a lot
- Moving more slowly than you used to
- Finding it hard to focus
- Having aches or pains in your body

Ask for help right away if you have any thoughts about wanting to die, hurting, and/or killing yourself! Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or 911. If you are deaf or hard of hearing call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline using TTY: 800-799-4889 or 911.

How will a doctor treat my depression?

The doctor will do an assessment to find out if you have depression or whether you have something else. If you have depression, you might need to take medication or see a professional for therapy. Some people might need to do both.

There are lots of medications that can help with depression. Your doctor will let you know what times you should take your medication. Your doctor will also let you know if you should take your medication with or without food. It is important to keep track of how you are feeling so you can tell your doctor. Sometimes it might take a few weeks for your medication to start working. Never stop taking any medication unless the doctor has told you to do so.

Therapy involves meeting regularly with a professional who is trained to treat people with depression. You will likely:

- Share information about your life.
- Learn about depression.
- Talk about your thoughts and feelings.
- Learn how to feel better.
- Learn how to change the way you think.
- Do activities to help you feel better.
- Track your feelings, thoughts, and what you are doing.
- Learn how to keep yourself safe and healthy.

Getting better can take some time. Sometimes people have depression more than once in their life. Sometimes depression can be so bad that people have to stay in a hospital for a while.



Anyone might get depression, but you may lower your risk of getting depression by:

- Spending time with other people that make you feel happy.
- Doing things that you enjoy as often as possible.
- Exercising or going for walks.
- Making sure you eat good food, with plenty of fruit and vegetables, and drinking plenty of water.
- Avoiding alcohol and other drugs.
- Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.

